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# SERVICE SPEED, STAFF COURTESY, AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION IN SUPERMARKETS IN AWKA METROPOLIS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY

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## Abstract

This study examined the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy, and customer satisfaction among supermarket customers in Awka Metropolis, with perceived service quality serving as a mediating variable. A correlational survey design was adopted. Data were collected from 357 customers drawn from selected supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. Four types of structured questionnaires were employed in the data gathering process; namely Service Speed Questionnaire (SSQ), Staff Courtesy Questionnaire (SCQ), Perceived Service Quality Questionnaire (PSQQ) and Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ). All the instruments used were validated through the marketing lecturers, while reliability was established through Cronbach's alpha. Data were gathered from the customers in the supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. Out of 384 copies of the questionnaire distributed, 357 were correctly filled and used for data analysis. The analysis of the research questions one and two involved Pearson product-moment correlation, while multiple regression analysis was used for research question three. The findings revealed that there was a positive and significant relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction. There was also a positive and significant relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction. Further to this, perceived service quality was found to mediate the aforementioned relationships. Service speed ($r = 0.612$, $p < 0.05$) and staff courtesy ($r = 0.674$, $p < 0.05$) significantly influenced customer satisfaction. The study concludes that customers would be more satisfied when services at supermarkets were fast, employees were polite, and the entire service process was reliable and satisfactory. It was proposed that the managers of supermarkets should enhance checkout speed, educate employees on how to be polite towards customers, supervise the service delivery process, and develop proper feedback mechanisms for customers.

**Keywords:** ***Service Speed, Staff Courtesy, Customer Satisfaction, Perceived Service Quality, Supermarkets.***

## Introduction

The retail trade business has been one of the most prominent manifestations of modern business activity due to the involvement of manufacturers, distributors and final consumers in the process of making decisions about purchases. Around the world, retail operations have advanced from the act of merely exchanging products for money to incorporate such aspects as convenience, experience, speed of operations, interactions between employees and clients, atmosphere, use of technologies and customer perceptions of value created. As the latest academic research on the issue demonstrates, contemporary retailers continue to change their approach to the provision of services to customers, considering such factors as the simplicity of the purchase process, comfort and high quality along with prices and assortment (Gauri et al., 2021). Supermarkets can be regarded as one of the most significant businesses operating in the realm of retail, since they combine elements of self-service, assortment of products, proper organization of display, regular purchases and customer contacts with employees. According to Heyrman (2021), supermarkets represent the concept of self-service retailers which have revolutionized the process of grocery distribution with an opportunity to browse organized departments and make purchases without any help of employees. Supermarkets, as stated by Cunha et al. (2023), are vital distribution channels for groceries and household supplies, where even online supermarket shopping still greatly relies on customer experience, convenience, and service delivery. Supermarkets within Awka Metropolis are important distribution channels that fit the needs of urban shoppers from the young generation to the adults residing in Awka Metropolis. Additionally, some recent findings reveal that supermarkets within Awka Metropolis have sufficient organisation in their business operations to warrant research in terms of internal controls and business practices, where one of such studies collected information from supermarket owners in Awka Metropolis. With growing competition

in the distribution markets, it is expected that consumers will evaluate supermarkets based on factors such as the availability of products in the shelves, speed of service, respect for their rights, and customer satisfaction with the shopping experience.

Discussion about customer satisfaction has been widely made within recent literature on services and retailing; however, each scholar views customer satisfaction from a different perspective. According to Slack and Singh (2020), customer satisfaction is a critical consequence of supermarket service quality and an important mediating factor that affects the relationship between service quality and loyalty. On the other hand, Xie & Sun (2021) defined customer satisfaction as an assessment made based on the customers' perceptions of quality at various stages in the service delivery process, which implies that customer satisfaction cannot be attributed to only the finished product. Cunha et al. (2023) linked customer satisfaction in the supermarket retail industry to the customer's experience of convenience, delivery, presentation and interaction. Kotler and Keller (2016) explain customer satisfaction as the customer's feeling after comparing expected service performance with actual experience. In the context of supermarket retailing, this means that customers become satisfied when the service they receive, such as fast attention, polite staff behaviour, and smooth checkout, meets or exceeds what they expected before entering the supermarket. In the same vein, Oliver's (1997) satisfaction theory also provides a useful foundation for this study. The theory suggests that satisfaction is formed after customers compare their expectations with the actual service experience. Where the actual experience is better than expected, satisfaction is likely to occur. However, where the service experience falls below expectation, dissatisfaction may result. Similarly, Nwankpa et al. (2025) stated that customer satisfaction is the emotion or feeling that results whenever a customer finds that a service meets or exceeds his/her expectations. In the current study, customer satisfaction can be understood as the

degree to which customers feel satisfied with their experience in supermarket services based on the speed of service, courteousness of the employees, quality of service received, and the ability of supermarkets to meet customer expectations. However, it extends beyond just being able to obtain the desired product; rather, it encompasses the overall feelings and assessment of the purchasing experience. The shopper may have found the desired product at the supermarket but will be dissatisfied because of the poor service process where the line to pay for products takes a long time or because the staff is rude and complaints are left unattended.

Service speed is an essential concept in service delivery due to its importance in delivering timely value to customers. In service literature, speed has been related to service responsiveness, promptness, and the capacity of an organization to offer services to customers without delay. According to Fida et al. (2020), responsiveness is a critical dimension of service quality whose effects have a significant effect on customer satisfaction. Slack and Singh (2020) stated that service quality dimensions play an essential role in affecting customer satisfaction among supermarket consumers, meaning that customers of these stores are sensitive to service efficiency and reliability. In the same line of thought, Cunha et al. (2023) established that convenience and speed concerns are essential factors influencing consumer experience, particularly when the consumer expects seamless shopping experiences. According to Permadi et al. (2025), service speed can be defined as the capacity of a service provider to provide services within the expected timeframe, leading to reduced waiting time for customers and enhancing customer satisfaction. In the current study, service speed involves the ability of supermarkets to attend to customers' requests in product inquiry stations, weighing stations, payment stations, complaints desk, and checkout stations. In supermarkets, slow service can create irritation even when products are available and prices are acceptable. Long queues, poor coordination at checkout points, delayed responses to enquiries and

slow billing systems may weaken the customer's perception of the supermarket. However, speed alone may not produce satisfaction if it is delivered in a cold, careless or disrespectful manner. A fast cashier who speaks harshly may still damage the customer's experience. This is why service speed must be considered alongside staff courtesy.

Staff courtesy is defined as the politeness, respect, friendliness, patience, and helpfulness of employees towards consumers during encounters. This definition of service quality has been mentioned in literature together with other service dimensions such as assurance, empathy, and interpersonal treatment. For example, Fida et al. (2020) have explained that there are dimensions like assurance, empathy, and responsiveness in relation to service quality and all these dimensions involve employee-customer relationships. Also, Slack et al. (2020) saw supermarket service quality dimensions and highlight that customer satisfaction depends on service-related variables in a supermarket setting. Additionally, Noel (2024) pointed out that service quality in retail is influenced by perception of the store environment, employee interaction, and service delivery. Besides, Falatouri et al. (2025) explain that food retail service quality should be considered based on unique features of retail stores and their service components encountered by customers during shopping. In this context, staff courtesy is the extent to which employees treat customers politely and respond to customers' requests, exhibit patience while dealing with complaints, help customers as necessary, and behave respectfully while interacting with customers during shopping in supermarkets. Courtesy in the supermarket context is very important since customers regularly interact with shelf attendants. A courteous employee can soften the negative effect of a delay by apologising and explaining the situation, while an impolite employee can make even a fast transaction feel unpleasant. Staff courtesy therefore affects not only the direct emotional

experience of customers but also the meaning customers attach to the overall quality of service. This makes it necessary to examine the mediating role of perceived service quality.

Perceived service quality refers to the customer's judgment of how good, reliable and satisfactory a service appears after comparing what was expected with what was actually experienced. Fida et al. (2020) explained service quality through the SERVQUAL dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy, all of which influence how customers evaluate service encounters. Xie and Sun (2021) showed that perceived quality affects customer satisfaction across different service stages, suggesting that customers form quality judgments before, during and after the service encounter. Slack and Singh (2020) further demonstrated in the supermarket sector that service quality significantly influences customer satisfaction and loyalty. In the present study, service quality perception refers to the overall interpretation by the customer of the service obtained in the supermarket following exposure to service speed and staff politeness.

Service quality perception acts as the psychological connection between the performance of employees in the supermarket and the feelings of customers at the end of it all. Customers could note that there is quick service and friendly staff; however, customer satisfaction would be enhanced once such observations are interpreted as indications that the supermarket is dependable, professional, and oriented toward customer satisfaction. Zeithaml et al. (2018) further emphasise that service quality is shaped by the customer's experience during service delivery. This is important because supermarket service is not limited to the sale of goods alone. It also includes the way customers are welcomed, assisted, attended to, and treated throughout the shopping process. Therefore, service speed and staff courtesy are important service attributes that can influence how customers perceive the overall quality of supermarket services. Recent research

confirms this mediation mechanism. According to Slack and Singh (2020), customer satisfaction mediates the association between service quality and loyalty in supermarkets. Xie and Sun (2021) also demonstrated that perceived quality plays an important role in determining customer satisfaction throughout the various stages of services offered. These views suggest that perceived service quality can explain how service speed and staff courtesy translate into customer satisfaction. However, although these arguments have been advanced in recent literature, they have not been sufficiently empirically proven in the specific context of supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. This gap makes the present study necessary, as it seeks to determine whether perceived service quality mediates the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction among supermarket customers in Awka Metropolis.

**Statement of the Problem**

There is a rising level of competition in Awka Metropolis supermarkets due to the various alternatives customers have for purchasing their foodstuffs, domestic goods, and other merchandise. In such a case, customer satisfaction is not influenced by product availability alone but also depends on the customer's time to receive service, waiting time in the queue, responses from sales assistants to queries, and the manner in which he or she is treated at the point of purchase. However, the majority of the customers in the selected supermarkets are faced with challenges like lack of speed of service, queuing, failure to attend to customer complaints immediately, poor response to questions, and unsatisfactory behavior on the part of the staffs. Although there are many positive elements in the service received like reasonable prices and product availability, the negative elements may negatively influence a customer's perception of the business. The key challenge is thus for the supermarket owners to determine whether there is any correlation between the speed of service offered and the customers' level of satisfaction with

it. Additionally, the perception of service quality should be established whether it acts as a mediating factor in the aforementioned relationship. In this context, this research study was carried out to analyze the association among service speed, courtesy of employees, and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in the Awka Metropolis, with service quality being used as a mediator.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis, with perceived service quality as a mediating variable. Specifically, the study

1. examined the relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.
2. determined the relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.
3. assessed the mediating role of perceived service quality in the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?
2. What is the relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?
3. To what extent does perceived service quality mediate the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?

**Null Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.
2. There is no significant relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.
3. Perceived service quality does not significantly mediate the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the SERVQUAL model of service quality developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985. The model explains service quality from the customer's point of view by comparing what customers expect from a service provider with what they actually experience. It is widely used in service-related studies because it helps to measure how customers judge the quality of services they receive. The SERVQUAL model is based on five major dimensions of service quality: tangibility, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy. These dimensions are useful in understanding how customers assess the quality of service in a supermarket environment. In a supermarket, customers do not only judge service quality by the products available, but also by how fast they are attended to, how courteous the staff are, how comfortable the shopping environment is, and how satisfied they feel after shopping.

**Tangibility** refers to the physical appearance of the supermarket and its facilities. This includes the neatness of the environment, arrangement of goods, appearance of staff, checkout counters, equipment, signage, lighting, and general cleanliness. A supermarket with a clean, organised, and

attractive environment can create a positive impression in the minds of customers and influence their satisfaction.

**Reliability** refers to the ability of the supermarket to provide services accurately and dependably. This means that customers expect prices to be correct, products to be available, staff to give accurate information, and transactions to be handled properly. When a supermarket consistently delivers what customers expect, customers are more likely to see it as reliable and trustworthy.

**Responsiveness** refers to the willingness and ability of staff to help customers promptly. This dimension is directly related to service speed. Customers expect staff to attend to them quickly, respond to their enquiries without unnecessary delay, reduce waiting time at checkout points, and handle complaints or requests as fast as possible. In this study, service speed is therefore viewed as an aspect of responsiveness because it shows how quickly and efficiently supermarket staff respond to customer needs.

**Assurance** refers to the knowledge, confidence, politeness, and professionalism shown by employees. In a supermarket, customers feel more comfortable when staff members are respectful, confident, honest, and able to assist them properly. Staff courtesy is connected to assurance because polite and professional behaviour can make customers feel valued, safe, and confident in the service they are receiving.

**Empathy** refers to the level of care, attention, and understanding shown to customers. It involves treating customers as important individuals rather than just buyers. In the supermarket setting, empathy can be seen when staff are patient, friendly, willing to listen, and ready to assist customers with their specific needs. Staff courtesy is also linked to empathy because courteous behaviour reflects concern, respect, and personal attention toward customers.

Based on this framework, service speed in this study is linked to the responsiveness dimension of SERVQUAL, while staff courtesy is linked to both assurance and empathy. Fast service shows that the supermarket is responsive to customer needs, while courteous behaviour shows that staff are professional, respectful, and caring. These service qualities are expected to influence customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is treated as the outcome of customers' service experience. When customers receive quick service and are treated with courtesy, they are more likely to feel satisfied with the supermarket. On the other hand, delays, long queues, rude behaviour, poor attention, or lack of professionalism may lead to dissatisfaction. Therefore, the SERVQUAL model is relevant to this study because it provides a clear link between the independent variables, service speed and staff courtesy, and the dependent variable, customer satisfaction.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

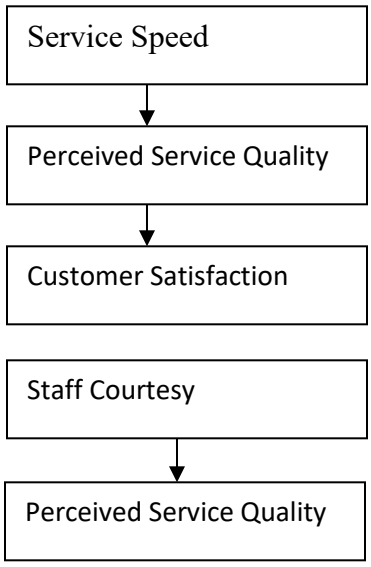




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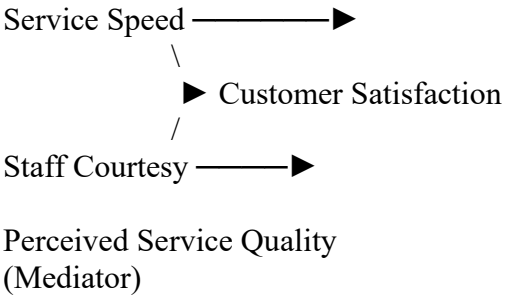
**Figure 2: Proposed Mediation Model**




**Empirical Review**

Fida et al. (2020) analyzed the effect of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty among customers of Islamic banks in Oman. In their study, a quantitative approach based on survey methodology was employed whereby 120 customers from four Islamic banks were surveyed. The research made use of the SERVQUAL framework while analyzing the data using correlation and regression analysis. The study findings indicated that there was a strong connection between service quality, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty. Moreover, the regression findings indicated that the variables of responsiveness and empathy positively affected customer satisfaction.

Slack and Singh (2020) analyzed the influence of service quality on customer satisfaction and loyalty among customers of supermarkets in Fiji. An intercept survey design method was applied involving 480 customers of supermarkets located in four urban areas. The objective of the study was to assess the influence of service quality on satisfaction and loyalty in the supermarket industry.

Slack et al. (2020) investigated the impact of service quality and customer satisfaction on customer loyalty and disloyalty dimensions. The study conducted a survey among 480 supermarket customers and then performed descriptive and inferential analysis of the data collected. results

indicated that empathy was highly related to customer satisfaction, repurchase intention and word-of-mouth, while customer satisfaction positively impacted loyalty and disloyalty results.

Xie and Sun (2021) investigated the impact of perceived quality on customer satisfaction during various service stages. The researchers developed a customer satisfaction formation model and evaluated the effects of perceived quality on satisfaction during the process of various service stages. In their findings, it was revealed that perceived quality is highly related to shaping customer satisfaction.

Cunha et al. (2023) evaluated the impacts of COVID-19 on the satisfaction of e-commerce customers in the supermarket industry of Brazil. Using the survey research method, the researchers collected 133 valid responses and identified three quality dimensions impacting customer satisfaction in supermarket e-commerce. Product presentation in the application was the strongest correlate of satisfaction, while delivery logistics was more critical when considering the impact of the COVID-19 factor.

**Research Method**

The study adopted the correlational survey research design. It was conducted in Awka Metropolis of Anambra State. Awka metropolis is an urban area with lots of supermarkets that carter to the teeming youthful population in the area. The population of the study comprised customers of selected supermarkets in Awka Metropolis, Anambra State. The study focused on customers who had purchased goods from the supermarkets and could therefore provide useful information about their shopping experience, especially in relation to service speed, staff courtesy, and customer satisfaction. For the purpose of the study, eight supermarkets within Awka Metropolis were selected. These supermarkets were chosen because they are among the active and regularly patronised supermarket outlets in the area. Since supermarkets do not usually keep a

fixed public record of daily customer visits, the population was estimated based on average customer traffic during the study period. On the average, each of the selected supermarkets was estimated to receive about 50 customers daily. This gave an estimated daily customer traffic of 400 customers across the eight supermarkets.

Using an average of 30 business days in a month, the estimated monthly customer population was therefore 12,000 customers. This figure was considered realistic because customer patronage varies from one supermarket to another and also differs between weekdays, weekends, festive periods, and normal shopping days. The target population was restricted to customers aged 18 years and above. This was because adult customers are more likely to make independent purchase decisions and give meaningful responses on issues relating to service quality and customer satisfaction. A sample size of 384 respondents was used for the study. The sample size was considered appropriate because the estimated population was large and customer traffic was not fixed. Therefore, Cochran's sample size formula for a large population was applied at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The formula is given as:

$$n = Z^2pq / e^2$$

Where:
n = required sample size
Z = 1.96 at 95% confidence level
p = 0.5
q = 0.5
e = 0.05

$$n = (1.96)^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5 / (0.05)^2$$
$$n = 3.8416 \times 0.25 / 0.0025$$
$$n = 0.9604 / 0.0025$$
$$n = 384.16$$

Thus, the sample size was approximately 384 respondents. This sample size was considered adequate for representing the estimated customer population of the selected supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

r. Therefore, the selected sample was an appropriate basis for the analysis and conclusion making of the research findings. The research adopted a multi-stage sampling method. First of all, the selected samples of the various supermarkets in Awka Metropolis included only those outlets that have been consistently operational within the city with adequate numbers of clients for conducting the survey. Secondly, the customer sample selection from the various supermarkets involved the use of convenience sampling. Customers of the various outlets sampled were interviewed after shopping and as they left the supermarkets. This was appropriate due to the absence of a comprehensive list of customers in all the various supermarkets sampled.

Four structured questionnaires were used for data collection. They were the Service Speed Questionnaire (SSQ), Staff Courtesy Questionnaire (SCQ), Perceived Service Quality Questionnaire (PSQQ), and Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ). The Service Speed Questionnaire (SSQ) contained 8 items which service speed questionnaire. The Staff Courtesy Questionnaire (SCQ) contained 8 items eliciting information on staff courtesy. The Perceived Service Quality Questionnaire (PSQQ) contained 10 items on Perceived Service Quality.

The Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) contained 10 items which elicited information on customers' level of satisfaction with their shopping experience. The instruments were structured on a five-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UD), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The response options were weighted as follows: Strongly Agree = 5, Agree = 4, Undecided = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the statement and a higher level of the variable being measured. The face and content validation of the four instruments was done through marketing experts. This is because they had to determine whether the questions would be clear and appropriate for the study. Reliability of the instruments was established through Cronbach's alpha

coefficient. SSQ had a reliability coefficient of 0.82, SCQ obtained a coefficient of 0.85, PSQQ obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.88, and CSQ obtained a reliability coefficient of 0.86. Because all the reliability coefficients obtained were beyond the 0.70 benchmark level, all instruments are therefore reliable for data gathering purposes.

**Reliability Coefficients of the Instruments**

| Instrument | Number of Items | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| Service Speed Questionnaire (SSQ) | 8 | 0.82 |
| Staff Courtesy Questionnaire (SCQ) | 8 | 0.85 |
| Perceived Service Quality Questionnaire (PSQQ) | 10 | 0.88 |
| Customer Satisfaction Questionnaire (CSQ) | 10 | 0.86 |
| Overall Instrument | 36 | 0.87 |

The data needed for the analysis was gathered through administering the questionnaire directly to supermarket shoppers in Awka metropolis. The researcher went to the selected supermarket shops where customers finished their shopping and offered to take part in the survey. The objective of the survey was explained to the respondents, and they were assured that the information gathered would be kept private and used only for academic purposes. The number of questionnaires issued out amounted to 384 copies. This was because the researcher administered and retrieved the forms in order to minimize loss of copies. Of the 384 copies issued out, only 357 copies were fully completed and returned back, whereas the remaining 27 copies were neither retrieved nor fully completed. Hence, 357 copies were analyzed for this study.

The Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to answer research questions one and two, as well as to test hypotheses one and two. The use of this method was justified since the first two research questions concerned the relationships between two variables. Multiple

regression analysis was used to answer research question three, as well as to test hypothesis three. The justification for using multiple regression was that the third research question was related to the predictive relationship that incorporated service speed, staff courtesy, perceived service quality and customer satisfaction. Multiple regression was employed in order to assess how much perceived service quality mediated this relationship.

**Results**

**Research Question One:** What is the relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?

**$H0_1$:** There is no significant relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Table 1: Pearson Correlation between Service Speed and Customer Satisfaction In Supermarkets In Awka Metropolis**

| Variables | N | r | p. value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Service speed | 357 | | | |
| customer satisfaction | | 0.612 | 0.000 | Moderate Positive relationship |

Information in Table 1 showed that the Pearson r is 0.612. This shows that there is a moderate positive relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. This means that when service speed improves, customer satisfaction also tends to increase. Thus, there is a moderate positive relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Research Question Two:** What is the relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?

**$H0_2$:** There is no significant relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis

**Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Staff Courtesy and Customer Satisfaction In Supermarkets In Awka Metropolis**

| Variables | N | r | p. value | Decision |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Staff courtesy | 357 | | | |
| customer satisfaction | | 0.674 | 0.000 | High Positive relationship |

Data in Table 2 showed that the Pearson r is 0.674. This shows that there is a high positive relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. This means that when staff are more courteous, customer satisfaction also tends to increase. Thus, there is a high positive relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, the p-value of 0.000 is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there is a significant relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Research Question Three:** To what extent does perceived service quality mediate the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis?

**$H0_3$:** Perceived service quality does not significantly mediate the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis.

**Table 3: Multiple regression Analysis Showing the Effect of Service Speed and Staff Courtesy on Perceived Service Quality in Awka Metropolis**

| Predictor variables | B | Std. Error | Beta | t-value | Sig. value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | 0.842 | 0.184 | — | 4.576 | 0.000 |
| **Service speed** | 0.386 | 0.041 | 0.421 | 9.415 | 0.000 |
| **Staff courtesy** | 0.417 | 0.044 | 0.448 | 9.477 | 0.000 |

**Model summary: R = 0.762, $R^2$ = 0.581, Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.579, F(2, 354) = 245.49, p = 0.000**.

The results depicted in Table 3 indicated that service speed and staff courteousness together predict perceived service quality. According to the $R^2$ value (0.581), service speed and staff courteousness accounted for 58.1% variance in perceived service quality. Service speed and staff courteousness were significant determinants of perceived service quality since their p-values were below 0.05.

**Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing Service Speed, Staff Courtesy and Perceived Service Quality as Predictors of Customer Satisfaction**

| Predictor variables | B | Std. Error | Beta | t-value | Sig. value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Constant** | 0.516 | 0.162 | — | 3.185 | 0.002 |
| **Service speed** | 0.169 | 0.039 | 0.185 | 4.333 | 0.000 |
| **Staff courtesy** | 0.271 | 0.040 | 0.291 | 6.775 | 0.000 |
| **Perceived service quality** | 0.463 | 0.042 | 0.447 | 11.024 | 0.000 |

Model summary: R = 0.801, $R^2$ = 0.642, Adjusted $R^2$ = 0.639, F(3, 353) = 211.04, p = 0.000.

It is evident from the findings presented in Table 4 that there was a joint effect of service speed, staff courtesy, and perceived service quality on customer satisfaction. The value of $R^2$ of 0.642 implies that the three independent variables accounted for 64.2% of the variations in the dependent variable. It is clear that perceived service quality emerged to be a statistically significant predictor of customer satisfaction with a beta of 0.447 and a p-value of 0.000. It can also be observed that both service speed and staff courtesy retained their significance in the model after introducing perceived service quality, but their betas became smaller. It means that perceived service quality served as a partial mediator of the relationship among the three variables. Additionally, the regression analysis reveals that perceived service quality is a significant predictor

of customer satisfaction, p = 0.000. The regression analysis further reveals that service speed and staff courtesy are significant predictors of perceived service quality, p = 0.000. As the results are significant at 0.05 levels, the null hypothesis is rejected. Consequently, it can be concluded that perceived service quality demonstrated evidence of partial mediation based on regression results.

**Discussion of Findings**

The first finding of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between service speed and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. This means that customers were more likely to be satisfied when they were attended to quickly, served without unnecessary delay, and allowed to complete their shopping within a reasonable time. This finding is understandable because supermarket customers often value convenience. Many customers visit supermarkets because they expect a more organised and faster shopping experience compared to traditional open markets. Therefore, when service becomes slow, especially at billing points, product enquiry points, or complaint desks, customers may begin to feel that the supermarket has failed to meet one of its basic service promises.

The finding may have occurred in Awka because the city is an active urban centre with students, civil servants, business people, workers, and households who often shop within limited time. In such an environment, customers are likely to be sensitive to delays. A customer who enters a supermarket expecting quick purchase and checkout may become dissatisfied if there are long queues, few cashiers, slow attendants, poor product location assistance, or delays caused by payment issues. This shows that in Awka, service speed is not just a minor operational matter; it is part of the customer's total shopping experience. Even where products are available and prices are acceptable, slow service can reduce satisfaction because it wastes the customer's time and creates frustration.

This finding supports Fida et al. (2020), who noted that responsiveness is an important aspect of service quality and a strong influence on customer satisfaction. It also agrees with Slack and Singh (2020), who found that service quality dimensions influence customer satisfaction, and Cunha et al. (2023), who argued that speed and convenience affect satisfaction in supermarket services. However, the present finding adds a local perspective by showing that in Awka Metropolis, customers may interpret fast service as a sign of seriousness, efficiency, and respect for their time. This may be slightly different from studies conducted outside Nigeria, especially in more developed retail environments where self-checkout systems, online ordering, automated billing, and advanced queue management systems are already common. In the Awka supermarket context, service speed still depends largely on the number of available staff, the efficiency of cashiers, staff alertness, power supply, payment network stability, and how well the supermarket manages customer flow.

The implication of this finding is that supermarket managers in Awka should treat service speed as a major strategy for improving customer satisfaction. Managers should ensure that enough cashiers are available during peak periods, checkout points are functional, staff are trained to respond quickly to customer enquiries, and queues are properly managed. Supermarkets should also consider using better billing systems, clearer product arrangement, and functional point-of-sale facilities to reduce unnecessary delays. Where customers experience faster service, they are more likely to return, recommend the supermarket to others, and develop positive attitudes toward the business.

The second finding showed a statistically significant positive relationship between staff courtesy and customer satisfaction in supermarkets in Awka Metropolis. This indicates that customers are more satisfied when supermarket employees treat them with politeness, respect,

patience, friendliness, and willingness to assist. This finding is important because supermarket shopping involves direct contact between customers and different categories of staff, including security personnel, shelf attendants, cashiers, supervisors, and customer service officers. A customer may enter the supermarket because of product availability, but the attitude of staff can determine whether the customer leaves with a positive or negative impression.

This finding may have occurred because Nigerian customers generally place strong value on respectful interpersonal treatment. In the Awka context, where customers may have several shopping alternatives, including open markets, mini-marts, neighbourhood stores, and competing supermarkets, staff behaviour can become a major basis for preference. A customer who is greeted warmly, guided patiently, and treated with respect is likely to feel valued. On the other hand, rude responses, impatience, unfriendly facial expressions, or poor handling of complaints may create dissatisfaction even when the supermarket has quality products. This means that staff courtesy works as an emotional part of service quality. It influences not only what customers buy but also how they feel during and after the shopping experience.

The finding agrees with Slack et al. (2020), who reported that supermarket service quality dimensions affect customer satisfaction and loyalty. It also supports Noel (2024), who observed that customers' perceptions of retail service quality are shaped by employee contact, store atmosphere, and the service delivery process. Similarly, Falatouri et al. (2025) maintained that service quality in food retailing is shaped by the service experience customers encounter while making purchases. However, compared with studies conducted outside Nigeria, the role of staff courtesy may be more visible in Awka because many supermarket operations still depend heavily on human interaction. In some foreign retail settings, customers may interact less with staff due to self-service technologies, automated checkouts, online shopping platforms, and digital customer

support. In Awka, however, customers often rely on staff for product location, price confirmation, payment assistance, complaint handling, and general guidance. This makes staff courtesy a stronger part of the customer's judgement of service quality.

The implication for supermarket managers is that staff attitude should not be treated as a personal matter alone but as a business issue. Managers should train employees on customer relations, polite communication, complaint handling, emotional control, and professional conduct. Security officers, cashiers, attendants, and supervisors should all be included in such training because customers interact with different staff members before completing a purchase. Managers should also monitor staff behaviour and encourage a service culture where customers are treated with dignity. This is important because one rude encounter can damage the customer's overall perception of the supermarket.

The third finding revealed that perceived service quality significantly mediated the relationship between service speed, staff courtesy, and customer satisfaction. This means that service speed and staff courtesy do not only affect satisfaction directly; they also influence how customers judge the overall quality of the supermarket's service. In other words, when customers are served quickly and treated politely, they are more likely to perceive the supermarket as efficient, reliable, professional, and customer-centered. This positive perception then increases their level of satisfaction.

This finding is important because it shows that customer satisfaction is not formed from one service encounter alone but from the general meaning customers attach to their experience. For example, a customer may not simply say, "the cashier was fast" or "the attendant was polite." Instead, the customer may conclude that the supermarket is well managed, organised, reliable, and worth patronizing again. This explains why perceived service quality is a strong link between

specific service actions and overall customer satisfaction. In Awka Metropolis, where customers have several retail options, this perception can influence repeat patronage and customer loyalty.

The finding supports Xie and Sun (2021), who reported that perceived quality plays an important role in influencing customer satisfaction in service settings. It is also consistent with Slack and Singh (2020), who identified service quality as a key predictor of customer satisfaction in supermarket contexts. In addition, Fida et al. (2020) showed that responsiveness, assurance, and empathy are important determinants of satisfaction. However, the present study contributes to the discussion by showing that in the Awka supermarket environment, customers' perception of service quality is strongly shaped by practical and visible service experiences, especially how fast they are served and how respectfully they are treated.

The finding also suggests that supermarket managers should not focus only on product availability and pricing. Although these are important, customer satisfaction also depends on the quality of the service process. Managers should therefore develop a service system that combines speed, courtesy, reliability, and customer care. If supermarkets in Awka improve only their products but ignore long queues, rude staff, poor response to complaints, and weak customer assistance, customer satisfaction may still remain low. On the other hand, supermarkets that combine good products with quick and courteous service are more likely to create a strong positive image in the minds of customers.

**Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that service speed and staff courtesy are important factors influencing customer satisfaction among supermarket customers in Awka Metropolis. The study showed that customers are more likely to be satisfied when supermarket services are delivered promptly and when staff members treat them with respect, patience, and

friendliness. The conclusion drawn from the study is that customer satisfaction in supermarket retailing is not determined only by product availability or price. The manner in which customers are served also plays a major role. Fast service reduces unnecessary delays and improves the shopping experience, while courteous staff behaviour makes customers feel valued and respected. These two service attributes therefore contribute meaningfully to how customers judge their overall experience in supermarkets.

The study further concluded that perceived service quality serves as an important link between service speed, staff courtesy, and customer satisfaction. This means that customers do not view speed and courtesy as isolated service actions. Rather, they interpret them as signs of a well-managed, reliable, and customer-focused supermarket. When customers perceive the service quality to be high, their level of satisfaction also increases. The study therefore establishes that service speed and staff courtesy are strategic determinants of customer satisfaction in supermarket retailing. Perceived service quality serves as an important psychological mechanism through which these service attributes influence customers' overall shopping experiences. For supermarkets in Awka Metropolis, the implication is clear: improving customer satisfaction requires not only selling quality products, but also delivering services in a fast, respectful, and customer-friendly manner.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The management of supermarket outlets in Awka metropolis needs to address the issue of service speed by hiring additional cashiers during peak hours and using proper methods of managing queues and ensuring that billing machines are functioning properly. This will minimize the time spent waiting in line and enhance customer satisfaction.

2. The owners of the supermarkets need to arrange for training of employees in customer service skills. This can be accomplished via periodical training seminars and other in-house sessions that aim at improving the courtesy of staff members and encouraging them to attend to customers politely and patiently.
3. The supervisors in charge of the supermarkets need to supervise service delivery at the billing points, product sections, and complaint desks to ensure that customers receive attention promptly. They can achieve this through monitoring and feedback from customers. This will enhance service delivery consistently in the eyes of the customers.
4. The owners of the supermarkets should set up easy ways through which customers can give feedback about their experiences. For instance, they can provide suggestion boxes, questionnaire forms, and WhatsApp groups through which customers can report service delay and poor attitude among staff members.

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